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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the campus environmental assessment and consultation program of the Illinois State University Student Counseling Center. The general model for this approach is outlined and its direction from the ecosystem model for campus design is discussed. The relationship between campus environmental assessment data and two system intervention functions, change advocacy and consultation, is highlighted, and described in some specificity. An example of both change advocacy and consultation is provided, along with diagrams of each process and of the general model. Finally, the project is discussed as a phase toward the development of an ecosystem model for the campus. (Author)

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Campus Environmental Assessment and Consultation

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Paper presented in Magoon, T. and Cornfeld, J. (Program Chairpersons), "Innovations in College Counseling," at the annual meeting of the American Personnel and Guidance Association, Chicago, Illinois, April, 1976.

Campus Environmental Assessment and Consultation

Program Rationale

The environment as client is an emerging Counseling Center orientation which has been given impetus by community psychology (e.g., Murrell, 1973), social ecology (e.g., Insel & Moos, 1974), and, perhaps of most relevance for our purposes, the ecosystem model for campus design (e.g., Banning & Kaiser, 1974). This new client focus speaks to an observation stressed by Oetting, Ivey, and Weigel (1970) in their survey of college and university counseling centers:

> "Traditional techniques simply are not capable of meeting the demands of today's educational environment. There are not enough counselors and the help they give is too often only reparative of damage after it occurs. What is needed is a new kind of counseling program: one that increases the effectiveness of staff by improving their ability to analyze and deal with problems without massive staff-time commitments; one that extends into the campus community, identifying and using its mental health resources; and one that is as concerned with prevention and personal growth as it is with remediation and repair of damage" (p. 44).

The authors then proceed to identify three major future trends for counseling centers: a) developing a community orientation; b) use of consultation as a major counseling intervention; and c) a shift in emphasis from counseling for remediation to counseling for personal development. These directions, labelled for the "future" in 1970, are now well upon us, as they have been for awhile. The campus environmental assessment and consultation program of the Illinois State University Student Counseling Center was begun in 1974 largely in response to this reality (see Conyne, 1975).

Program Description

General Model

The campus environmental assessment and consultation program addresses Level I (macro-design) and Level II (micro-design) of the ecosystem model. The Level I program component targets for design the transactions of campus members

(students, currently) with the entire campus community, while the Level II component targets the transactions of students with participating campus organizational units. The purpose at both levels is to assess (map) the people-environment transactions, to feedback ensuing environmental impact data to the appropriate campus groups (e.g., organizational units, central administrators, academic deans, etc.), and to work with these groups through either change advocacy (Level I) or consultation (Level II) to facilitate environmental change aimed at benefiting campus members. This general approach can be represented by the following diagram (Harding & Conyne, 1976):

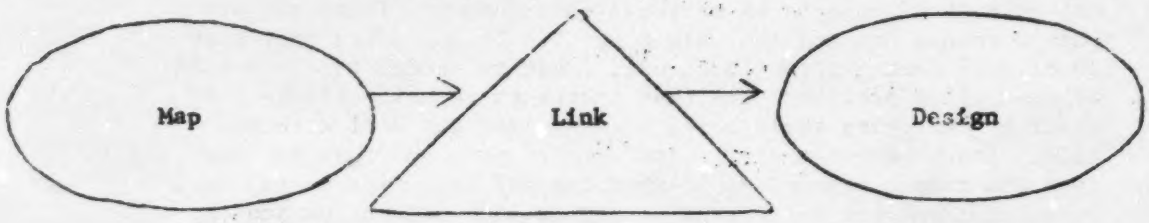

Figure 1. General Model.

Mapping: The EAI

Mapping is accomplished in our program through use of the Environmental Assessment Inventory (EAI, Conyne & Harding, 1975), an instrument which can be used to assess impacts of selected environmental variables on campus members. The EAI contains two broad categories and several sub-categories, resulting from an application to our campus situation of Moos' work in environmental classification (1974). Category I, "Campus climate," consists of the sub-categories Academic climate, Academic formats, Social climate, and Physical climate; Category II, "Administrative units," allows individual units to be assessed for Staff availability, Staff helpfulness, Unit's procedures, and Unit's physical properties.

Quantitative data (means, frequency counts, standard deviations) and qualitative data ("environmental referents," the environmental specifics which led to the quantitative scores) are yielded from the EAI. Assessments are conducted

monthly by the 75 Counseling Center paraprofessionals who are trained to observe and record environmental impacts on students. Emerging EAI data are then organized and communicated through change advocacy (Level I) or consultation (Level II) to the appropriate campus group.

Linkage Interventions

Level I: Change Advocacy

Level I (macro), directed at campus climate assessment and design, uses data resulting from EAI category I, "Campus climate." The linkage function at Level I is change advocacy, a term which connotes its active, initiating orientation. When behaving as change advocates, Counseling Center staff must openly express their value orientation from the beginning. In our project, this value orientation is to advocate campus change focused on improving campus environmental impacts on students.

An example of change advocacy may illustrate the function more clearly. Personal safety may be identified as an urgent student issue through mapping. Supporting and fresh environmental impact data are communicated to the Director of the Physical Plant by a Counseling Center change advocate, who tries to facilitate positive environmental change leading to increased personal safety. This process is illustrated, as follows:

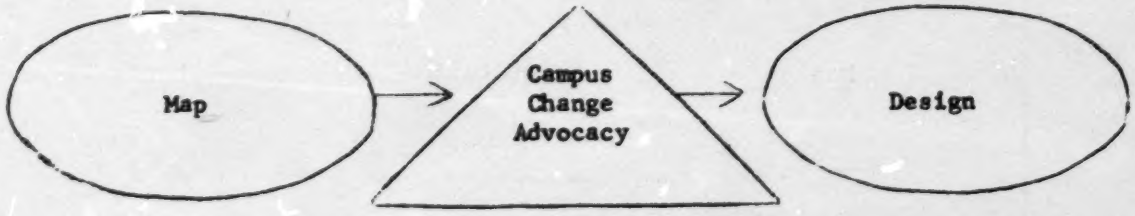

Figure 2. Level I Model.

Level II: Consultation

The linkage intervention at Level II (micro) is consultation to requesting administrative units which come primarily, but not exclusively, from student

affairs. After a unit's request, the Level II process is initiated to provide unit personnel with confidential monthly data regarding the unit's impact on students. Consultation is offered regarding design issues which develop and/or other issues initiated by the consultee which may be unrelated to the data.

The Level II process is aimed at improving the campus environment by assisting requesting administrative units in their own organizational improvement efforts. Directions for involvement are set by the consultee through a flexible contract negotiated with the consultant.

An example of Level II consultation may help clarify this process. A college health service may request to participate in the environmental assessment of its impact on students and to receive consultation related to the impact data. The "staff helpfulness to students" item may show that doctors generally are impersonal in their treatment of students. Consultation, then, might take the form of training the doctors in helping skills during one semester, hopefully resulting in more satisfactory doctor-student interactions. The Level II process can be represented as follows:

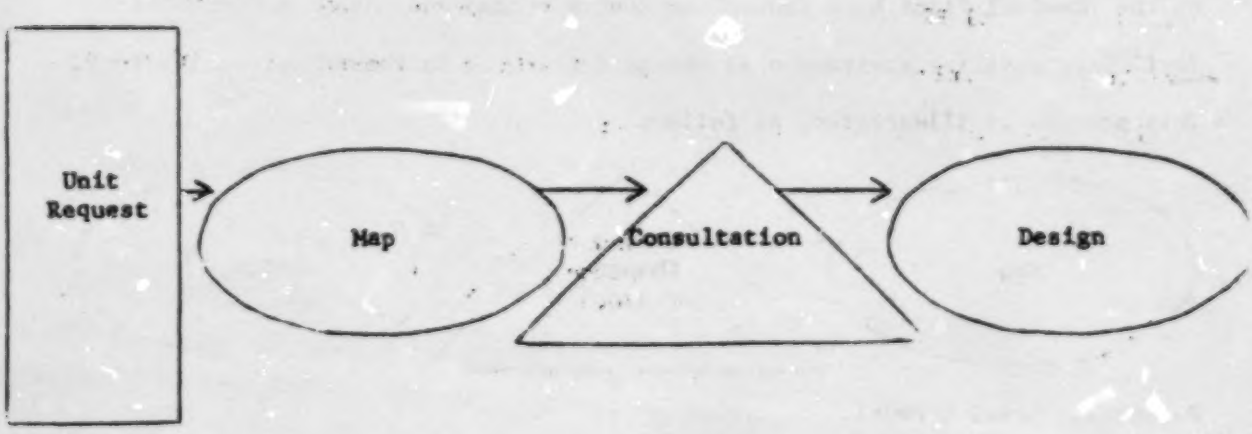

Figure 3. Level II Model.

The Project's Future

Currently, at Level I we are working with several key decision-making bodies in the University, including central administrative, academic, and student affairs groups. Although our contacts with each group are relatively frequent, they typically are brief and usually devoted to informational dissemination accompanied by some discussion of issues. At Level II we have 12 on-going consultation arrangements, all with an environmental impact focus, yet each is conducted independently within a confidential consulting relationship.

While we have made considerable progress in gaining access with and entry to "campus decision-makers," we envision the project to be in a transitory phase which might be characterized as piecemeal and fragmented. Our goal is to facilitate establishment of an ecosystem model on our campus, a phase which might be characterized as wholistic and interdependent.

However, environmental change stimulated by internal change agents is difficult work and it needs to be approached with patience and in graduated steps. Our project respects and strongly corraborates this observation.

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